Strategy 3. <u>Collaboratively develop standards that enhance the quality, efficiency, security and effectiveness of America's Workforce Network</u>

Strategy Three addresses a most crucial e-government issue. It suggests that the AWN and its partners must cooperate to accomplish the following difficult tasks:

• begin the process of identifying and adopting ***standards***;
• plan and deliver appropriate ***technology assistance*** to all AWN partners;
• invest in service delivery and IT systems which citizens feel are both ***secure and private***;
• address the need for practical yet secure processes for ***sharing data*** within AWN.

<u>Standards</u>: The AWN must initiate processes for identifying and adopting open standards that will support data exchange across the IT systems of all the partners. This data exchange needs to take place not only across the state and local partners of AWN but across the WIA partner agencies such as the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Federal technical standards and use of open architectures are essential components in e-government that assure the effective integration and interoperability of the cross-functional, cross-organization systems and services inherent in Workforce Investment System. However, beyond technical integration are the user issues of: *consistency, ease of use, ability to understand, and the need for common language and definitions* Areas where standards may be investigated include:

- program-level technology
- common data exchange elements
- Web site functionality and usability
- common intake and case management procedures
- "harmonizing" program terms and definitions among federal programs
- assurance of accessibility for the disabled and for those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The ETA's role in this first sub-strategy may be to act as a clearinghouse and coordinator of information exchange. It may also convene committees and sponsor research programs that focus on specific standard's questions. A single assumption underpins all ETA efforts: standards must emerge from a collaborative and coordinated process where all participants are fully involved.

<u>Technology Assistance</u>: ETA in coordination with its partners must plan and deliver adequate technology assistance to all AWN partners. The role of technology assistance may include building on existing capabilities of existing organizations and:

• establishing a basic threshold of technology readiness;
• sponsoring of research;
• providing direct consultation and assistance as appropriate to state and local professionals;
• acting as a convener of committees and task groups;
• a clearinghouse for information, ideas, issues, models, best practices, etc.
• a nexus for establishing metrics for measuring progress and success;
• a source of information upon which the AWN could make investments technology innovations;

<u>Security and Privacy</u>: The third task within this strategy is to plan for AWN Information Technology systems which citizens feel are both secure and private. Perhaps no other task is

more critical than building and promoting information systems that citizens believe are useful and secure and private. Without this achievement nothing we accomplish will be used and it will be difficult to secure funding to maintain these strategies. The ETA/AWN strategy may include assisting in the setting of minimum levels of expectations for customer privacy and for the secure transmission of personal information.

Data Sharing: During the regional consultation meetings there was general agreement that data sharing - among states, among local areas, between states and local areas, between states and national offices - was an inherently good thing but fraught with dangers and concerns. The dangers were largely found in privacy/security issues and the concerns focused on the difficulty of data exchange in environments that had no consistent common data elements/definitions/files, etc. The benefits were easily identified as data sharing can lead to better insights into program management, improved accuracy in assessments and a variety of efficiency gains. The ETA role in this strategy may include:

- the sponsoring of research;
- acting as a convener of committees and task groups;
- coordinating the identification of important standards to facilitate data sharing such as XML standards for Internet, Web-based data transfer systems;
- a clearinghouse for information, ideas, issues, models, best practices, etc.
- a nexus for establishing metrics for measuring progress and success;
- a source of information upon which the AWN could make investments in data sharing innovations.

Imagine this scenario three years from now:

During a Congressional debate on the new World-wide Electronic Trade Act questions arise on the number of individuals enrolled in technology training that would lead to certain certifications in certain geographic areas. The ETA electronically mines the appropriate state data warehouses using agreed upon XML interfaces, and provides tailored data to inform the debate... in a matter of minutes! It uses wireless technology and search-and-assemble smart software that knows, from previous questions, how and where to get the data. Not only are precise enrollment figures for specific programs made available, but by selectively deploying pre-configured analytical software worker training trend analysis and workforce shortages are delivered as well.